A REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS
FOR A COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

TO

PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IN COSPONSORING

A

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

ON

BIOLOGICAL VARIABILITY WITHIN AND BETWEEN CHILDREN FROM DIFFERENT U.S. RACIAL/ETHNICITY GROUPS: IMPLICATIONS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RISK ASSESSMENT

National Center for Environmental Assessment - Washington Office
Office of Research and Development
United States Environmental Protection Agency
Washington, DC 20460

NCEA-W Research Solicitation - NCEA-W-99-01

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NCEA-W RESEARCH REQUEST

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The National Center for Environmental Assessment - Washington Office (NCEA-W), within the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Research and Development (ORD), is issuing this "Request for Applications" (RFA) for a cooperative agreement to provide assistance in cosponsoring a national conference that will examine the scientific evidence on the question of the "Biological Variability Within and Between Children From Different U.S. Racial/Ethnicity Groups: Implications for Environmental Risk Assessment." The value of the cooperative agreement award is estimated to range from $60,000 to $140,000 total over a period of two years depending upon funding availability. Applications must be postmarked, dated by a delivery service or marked received by NCEA-W personnel by **May 30, 1999**. Applications will be reviewed and evaluated by guidelines as set forth in this document. Interested parties are invited to submit a competitive Cooperative Agreement Application, including a full and detailed project application for funding consideration. The availability of this solicitation document is being announced via Commerce Business Daily and the NCEA Internet web site. The EPA reserves the right not to make any awards from this solicitation. Interagency agreements related to this activity are not solicited.

This document provides information about NCEA, the research topic for which applications are being solicited, the competitive process for awarding cooperative agreements, and the preparation of applications (see the Table of Contents on the pages preceding this section). We urge each applicant to read and consider carefully the information presented in these sections before preparing an application.

2.0 NCEA MISSION

NCEA serves as a national resource center for human health and ecological risk assessment, including hazard identification, dose-response analysis, and exposure assessment with an ultimate purpose to characterize risk from exposures to harmful environmental agents. NCEA occupies a critical position in the science and public policy arena of research and risk management by (1) integrating worldwide research findings and data, and (2) providing the regulators with assessments and methodologies which transfer the research data into characterizations that address the risk management need to understand the public health impacts.

In support of these functions, NCEA focuses its work in three major areas:

1) Development of methodologies that reduce uncertainties in current risk assessing practices
   - Dose-response models and factors
   - Exposure models and factors
   - Understanding animal/ human toxicity relationships

Community-based risk assessment
Variability/uncertainty

2) Conduct assessments of contaminants of national significance

3) Provide guidance and support to risk assessors
Data bases
Risk assessment guidelines
Expert tools
Expert consultation and program support
Risk assessment training

Other important activities of NCEA include: acting as a catalyst for advances in the science of risk assessment brought about, for example, by cooperative endeavors; facilitating an exchange of ideas among environmental health professionals in the federal, state, industrial, academic, environmental, public interest, and international communities; and characterizing the impacts of environmental receptors whether they result from exposure(s) to single, complex, or multiple physical, chemical, biological, or radiological stressors.

3.0 RESEARCH FOR WHICH APPLICATION IS BEING SOLICITED

3.1 Background

Over the past few years, public attention has increasingly focused on potential adverse health effects in minorities and children from exposure to pesticides and other toxic chemicals in food, water, and the environment. Consequently, in 1994, President Clinton issued an Executive Order on Environmental Justice focusing on the disproportionate risks to minorities and, in 1997, he issued another Executive Order on the protection of children from environmental health risks. In addition, Congress enacted both the Food Quality Protection Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act in 1996 so that infants and children would be included in environmental risk assessment.

In exploring the factors that affect childrens' health risks from exposure to toxic agents from the environment, it is important to consider that a substantial amount of anecdotal and circumstantial evidence suggests that these risks can vary by race\ethnicity. Risks to children from one racial/ethnicity group may differ qualitatively or quantitatively from those in other groups because of differences in their physiology, growth and development rates, metabolic processes, respiratory rates, enzyme systems, disease susceptibility, responses to environmental stressors, body proportion, and anatomy. Depending on the circumstances, these biological differences may make them more or less susceptible to the toxic effects of environmental agents.

Although it is known that these differences can occur both within and between racial/ethnic groups, the relationship to childrens'environmental health risks, with few exceptions, has not been established. This is primarily because of the lack of sufficient data and the fact that risk assessors generally use biological data for children and adults that are representative of a

small subset of the Caucasian race. Consequently, many regulatory programs within EPA are beginning to explore how biological variability and differences affect the uncertainties associated with estimating environmental health risks for children and other members of the general population.

Crucial to properly assessing risks to children is the development of a modified and more biologically based race/ethnicity concept. EPA, other federal agencies, and health researchers use a socialized categorization scheme based on a race concept which assumes that: 1) race reflects underlying genetic homogeneity; and 2) the genes which determine race also determine health status. However, according to many biologists and anthropologists, these assumptions are purely arbitrary and without merit. The consensus is that there is more genetic variation within races than between them, and racial categories based on social definitions tend not to represent biological distinctiveness.

In response to the Presidential Executive Orders as well as the Food Quality Protection Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Office of Research and Development, the Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances, and the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response wish to support a national conference. The purpose of the conference is to convene a group of experts to present, discuss, and evaluate environmental health issues as they relate to the biodiversity that exists within and between American children.

The specific goals of the conference include the following:

- to discuss the concept of race/ethnicity and its application in environmental health risk assessment and determine if/how a more biologically based concept can be developed and utilized;

- to discuss and describe the most current up-to-date information showing biological variability and differences within and between the children from the different racial/ethnic groups (i.e., anthropometric, physiologic, biochemical, pharmacokinetic, metabolic, toxicological, endocrinological, etc.) and to determine how these differences impact risk assessment;

- to discuss racial/ethnic differences in diseases (i.e., asthma, hypertension, diabetes, osteoporosis, cancer, etc.) and genetic polymorphisms and the role these differences play in childrens' susceptibility to harmful environmental agents;

- to identify and discuss how the current research and methods can be used for assessing environmental health risks to children from the different racial/ethnicity groups;

- to identify future research needs for better assessing those environmental health risks to children that are influenced by racial/ethnicity factors; and

- to publish the proceedings of the conference as a special issue of the journal, Environmental Health Perspectives.

3.2 Project Description

NCEA is seeking applications from well-qualified, eligible, and scientifically oriented organizations to cosponsor a national conference made up of a culturally diverse mix of scientific experts from the private and public sectors, academia, and the international community to foster a scientific dialogue that will address the specific conference theme outlined above. EPA expects the awardee to invest itself in the activity, hence the "cosponsor" designation. The submitted proposal should delineate the investment it proposes. Training sessions and or seminars (i.e., in environmental risk and exposure assessment, ethnogenetic layering concepts, GIS, the Environmental Genome Project, etc.) could be a part of the conference. The benefit to the greater scientific community will be to provide the most up-to-date information on population variability and to identify specific approaches or other activities for improving the national and international risk assessment processes, practices, or procedures. Improvements through future research may be one of the outcomes of this conference, but specific research proposals are not solicited or funded by this effort.

The proposal should describe the proposed conference in detail. Information such as, intended audience, the number planned for general attendance, number and type of impaneled experts, a description of the anticipated collaboration with the NCEA, a detailed budget, and other factors that develop the conference concept should be included. The actual conference could be in the second year, the first year dedicated to planning and implementation.

It is up to the awardee as to how the conference will be conducted, but at a minimum it should be interactive, where ideas and opinions can be openly exchanged and discussed. The proceedings of the conference is to be published by the end of the second year.

For budget planning purposes, EPA collaboration costs will be funded by NCEA. This includes administrative and travel expenses related to the collaboration. Regardless, federal assistance funds must not be used to fund the travel and expenses of any federal attendees.

3.3 The EPA Collaborative Role

The awardee is expected to serve as a member of a steering committee that will work together with EPA to develop the conference and its agenda, identify speakers and panelists, and promote attendance. EPA would provide scientific information on various risk assessment issues, as requested by the awardee. NCEA could also provide scientific information in many areas associated with health risk assessment, and anticipates working with the awardee to ensure that the conference offers the proper balance of "stakeholders" related to the specific issue at hand.

4.0 FUNDING

4.1 Eligibility

The funds available for this project will be awarded using a cooperative agreement funding instrument. A cooperative agreement is different from a grant of funds in that the government wishes to establish a collaborative research relationship with a nonprofit research institution of higher education, individuals, or a nonprofit research organization with the primary purpose of organizing and sponsoring the conference. Applicants must be eligible to receive federal assistance under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), the Solid Waste Disposal Act, the Clean Water Act (CWA), the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), or the Clean Air Act (CAA).

4.2 Award Value

The award is estimated to range from $60,000 to $140,000 total over a two-year period.

4.3 Period of Performance

An official in EPA's Grants Operations Branch will issue the final award for the cooperative agreement. No costs should be incurred before the award agreement is issued. Funding to begin work under the cooperative agreement will not be available until after the award is made. An award is expected in the period between August and October, 1999, or shortly thereafter, with the start date to be determined by the Award Official. Assistance under this agreement will be provided for up to two years, dependent on progress.

5.0 ORD POLICY ON COOPERATIVE RESEARCH AND AWARD OF COMPETITIVE COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

5.1 Use of Cooperative Agreements

In preparing applications in response to this solicitation, applicants should consider the following relevant ORD policy with respect to the use of cooperative agreements. The EPA funds extramural projects through both assistance and acquisition mechanisms (memo from Christian Holmes dated December 2, 1992). By statute (31 USC 6305),

> "An executive agency shall use a cooperative agreement as the legal instrument reflecting a relationship between the United States Government and a State, a local government, or other recipient when:
>
> (1) the principal purpose of the relationship is to transfer a thing of value to the State, local government, or other recipient to carry out a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by a law of the United States instead of acquiring (by purchase,

lease or barter) property or services for the direct benefit or use of the United States Government; and

(2) substantial involvement may occur between the executive agency and the State, local government, or other recipient when carrying out the activity contemplated in the agreement."

Cooperative agreements may not be used as a mechanism to acquire goods or services for the direct benefit or use of the federal government where a type of procurement contract is the appropriate instrument (31 U.S.C. 6303 (3)).

ORD is authorized under various statutes to conduct research and development in different areas of environmental science. It is ORD's policy that such research is appropriate for assistance agreements when the primary purpose of such research is to "carry out a public purpose of support or stimulation" as stated in 31 U.S.C. 6305.

Consequently, the research subject area described in this solicitation is distinguished by being primarily in support of EPA's broad research and development mission, and is distinguished from other projects in the laboratory whose primary purpose is to deliver a required product for another EPA office. Products or services procured primarily for the direct benefit of another EPA office or for ORD scientists in conducting research and development, (e.g., analytical services, ADP support, and supplies) are inappropriate for acquisition through assistance agreements. Incidental development of products of use to ORD or a program office does not, in itself, preclude use of a cooperative agreement.

Cooperative agreements anticipate the possibility substantial involvement of EPA personnel in the activity contemplated by the agreement. This involvement may include:

- collaborative participation in the design, conduct, and interpretation of research activity;
- negotiated changes in direction of effort within the project scope;
- in-kind provision of services and/or equipment; and
- co-publication.

The specific type and extent of EPA involvement in the cooperative effort will be defined explicitly in the agreement.

While cooperative agreements are to include substantial involvement as described above, specific limitations are placed on the EPA’s involvement.

(a) Key Personnel - The professional qualifications/skills of key personnel (positions) should be designated in the cooperative agreement. The agreements shall state that EPA shall have the right of review and concurrence in the qualifications of

personnel proposed to fill these positions. Becoming involved in the formal personnel processes of cooperating parties is inappropriate for EPA personnel.

(b) Supervision of Cooperator Personnel - In order to sustain the collaborative relationship anticipated by the cooperative agreement and sustain effective cooperator management, EPA personnel shall not supervise or direct the day-to-day activities of cooperator personnel.

(c) Contracting Under Cooperative Agreements - Use of contractors by cooperators is authorized; however, the role and cost of subcontracts must be clearly identified in advance in the cooperative agreement. The EPA personnel shall not be involved in selection or direction of subcontractors.

(d) Project Officer Role - Within the scope of collaboration anticipated in the cooperative agreement, the EPA project officer is responsible for assuring compliance with technical and management requirements, including peer review of publications, quality assurance procedures and documentation, key personnel and other special conditions, and periodic assessment of progress toward the stated objectives of the agreement.

5.2 Competition

It is ORD policy that, to the maximum degree feasible, opportunity to compete for the award of cooperative agreements will be afforded to all qualified scientific institutions or researchers. Solicitations are to be structured to provide both full and open opportunity for competition, and to ensure that a reasonable likelihood exists for applications to be submitted by more than one respondent.

Published solicitations for applications for competitive cooperative agreements shall include discussion of the type and extent of EPA planned involvement in the assisted activity, the criteria to be employed in evaluating applications, and a discussion of the process for evaluation and decision. Decisions related to evaluation, ranking, and award of research cooperative agreements shall be fully documented, including criteria for evaluation, results of evaluation, and the basis for the award decision.

Applications submitted in response to an EPA competitive solicitation will not be considered if the proposer asserts a claim of confidentiality of information contained therein, unless explicitly allowed in this guidance.

The collaborative nature of the cooperative agreement process makes it appropriate for the project officer to negotiate the final form of the agreement with the principal investigator. However, to avoid giving an unfair competitive advantage to any applicant, it is important that the negotiation step not occur until all competitive applications have been reviewed and ranked and the decision official has made a tentative selection of the successful applications. Until that time, all federal employees must avoid providing any information to any applicant that might confer an

unfair competitive advantage. This does not preclude formal procedures for providing written comments back to applicants on applications or any other formal procedure that systematically treats all applicants equally.

The general EPA policy on peer review provides the framework for ORD specification of peer review requirements. Peer review of major competitive solicitations is desirable. Peer review of applications for funding submitted in response to competitive solicitation is mandatory.

6.0 INFORMATION FOR INVESTIGATORS PREPARING APPLICATIONS

This section contains information of importance to research investigators preparing cooperative agreement full applications. Information about the full application process and application forms are found in the "Application Kit for Assistance." For an application, call Gladys Randolph at 202-564-5305 or write to: EPA Grants Operation Branch (3903R), 401 M Street, SW, Washington, DC 20460. Additional general information about legislation and regulations for assistance programs can be found in the *Federal Register* (Friday, September 30, 1982, Part VIII, pages 45056-45076), in the Code of Federal Regulations (40 CFR 30), or the following internet web sites: www.whitehouse.gov/wh/eop/omb/grants/ and www.epa.gov./epa home/grants.htm.

6.1 Review Criteria

The following criteria (with the quantitative weight for each criterion given in parenthesis) will be used in the review of applications:

A. Qualifications (30)

1. Evidence that the applicant organization is highly recognized domestically and internationally for its efforts, past and present, to advance the human health sciences, public health, and the practice of risk assessment (10).

2. Demonstrated ability to attract scientists of the highest repute to address health and risk assessment topics, including representatives from all stakeholder groups including academia, industry, and non-government organizations, along with the ability to work in collaboration with U.S. government agencies to further the public interest (10).

3. Demonstrated expertise, scientific qualifications, time availability, and organizational structure of the principal investigator and key personnel to support the proposed research (10).

4. Past ability to execute financial agreements (cooperative, grant and/or contract) with the U.S. government to the benefit of the public (10).

B. Administrative Capability (25)

1. Ability of the applicant to provide technical support, facilities, and equipment relevant to the successful completion of the conference (10).

2. Ability to collate, format, and arrange means to publish or otherwise disseminate the results of the activities contemplated under this assistance agreement to the scientific community and public (10).

3. Evidence of quality control/quality assurance mechanisms for implementing and tracking the administrative components of the research (5).

C. Proposal Quality (45)

1. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates an understanding of the state of science on the proposed topic, and the contribution of the applicant's proposed approach to advancing the state of the science (10).

2. The scientific merit of the proposed approach to addressing the conference topics, including the soundness of fundamental scientific and technical approaches, consideration of unique or innovative approaches evident in the application, and its proposed methods for gaining wide stakeholder participation and consensus (15).

3. The overall quality and clarity of the application regarding its objectives, proposed methods, ability to achieve these goals, and related funding information (10).

6.2 Submission of Full Applications

One original and five copies of each full application must be submitted. Completed applications that respond to this solicitation must be mailed by regular, priority, or express U.S. mail or delivered by other delivery service, and received at the address indicated below on or before the deadline indicated in the assistance package. If you need applications or solicitations, contact Dave Kelley in NCEA; phone: 202-564-3263; fax: 202-565-0050; email: kelley.dave@epa.gov.

via regular mail service

David Kelley
NCEA (8623D)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
401 M St., S.W.
Washington, DC 20460

via delivery service

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808 17th St., N.W.
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Applications that are postmarked, dated, or marked received after the deadline will not be considered.

6.2.1 General Application Description

The project narrative section of the application must not exceed 35 pages (on 8 ½ x 11-inch paper, consecutively numbered pages, and of standard type [10-12] characters per inch), including tables, graphs, and figures. For purposes of this solicitation, the "project narrative section" of the application must include all of the following items:

(1) Description of Project
(2) Objectives
(3) Results or Benefits Expected
(4) Research Support and Stimulation
(5) General Project Information
(6) Collaboration with NCEA Staff
(7) Relevance to Research
(8) Quality Assurance Narrative

Items 1,2,3, and 5 are described in the Application/Information Kit. For this specific solicitation, items 4, 6, and 7 must be included in the project narrative section. Since the primary purpose of this assistance is to "carry out a public purpose of support or stimulation," please address specifically under item 4 how this assistance will support and stimulate societal environmental research programs and accomplish a public purpose.

Applicants will observe Review Criteria in Section 6.1 of the assistance package and should prepare the application in such a way as to ensure that reviewers will be able to address the review criteria. Each application must also include an item (8) Quality Assurance Narrative Statement as described in Section 6.4.3. Another five pages may be used for this section.

Attachments, appendices, and reference lists for the narrative section may be attached, but are included in the 35-page limitation. Additional items not included in the 35-page limitation are the SF-424 and other forms; budgets; resumés; the abstract; and the cover sheet. The cover sheet must contain the following information:

1) Title of the application
2) Name of the institution or individual
3) Mailing address for disposition of the application
4) Name, phone, fax, and e-mail information for the principal investigator

Resumés for each principal investigator should focus on education, positions held, relevant experience and accomplishments, and most recent or related publications. Itemized budgets, including justifications, must not exceed five consecutively numbered pages (excluding budget information on SF-424.) Applications not meeting these requirements will not be evaluated.

All applications received by the due date will be date-stamped and reviewed to ensure that all forms and documents have been appropriately prepared. Incorrectly prepared forms and inadequate documentation can be grounds for rejection of the application from the evaluation process, and from subsequent consideration for funding.

6.2.2 Substantial Involvement of EPA Scientists in Cooperative Agreements

Section 3.2 of this document emphasizes the importance of collaboration in cooperative agreements. The fundamental role of collaboration with EPA scientists in the research activity contemplated by the agreement makes the cooperative research mechanism a distinctly different one from a grant mechanism, in which no collaboration is permitted. Examples of substantial involvement with EPA scientists include: (1) collaboration in the design, measurement, analysis, and interpretation of the research activity; (2) collaboration in publishing articles or reports about the research; (3) collaboration in negotiating changes in direction of work under the specific agreement.

6.2.3 Quality Assurance Requirements

As indicated in U.S. EPA's General Regulations for Assistance Programs (40 CFR 30.503), all applicants seeking financial assistance from the EPA must submit with their application one of the following pieces of quality assurance (QA) documentation: Quality Assurance Narrative Statement, Quality Assurance Program Plan, or Quality Assurance Project Plan. As part of the application that responds to this solicitation, each applicant must prepare a modified Quality Assurance Narrative Statement. This QA Narrative must discuss each of the quality elements listed below in the context of the research being proposed and any laboratory managing and performing analysis for the proposed research.

Additional information about the quality elements can be found in the American National Standards Institute document entitled, "Quality Management and Quality System Elements–Guidelines" (ANSI/ASQC Q94-1987). The quality elements of interest with respect to this solicitation are:

1. Quality Management
   - ! Quality Policy
   - ! Quality Objectives
   - ! Responsibilities and Authority

2. Structure of Quality Systems
   - ! Quality Organizational Structure
   - ! Resources and Personnel
   - ! Operational Procedures
   - ! Quality Manual
   - ! Record keeping Policy
   - ! Measurement and Test Equipment Controls
   - ! Review and Evaluation of Quality Systems

U.S. EPA's General Regulations for Assistance Programs (40 CRF 30.503) require successful applicants to develop and implement a Quality Assurance Program which is acceptable to the award official to receive an EPA Assistance Award. The quality Assurance Narrative Statement must be approved by EPA prior to award as being adequate to ensure that the organization is capable of preparing an acceptable Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). While QAPP is not required as part of the application to be submitted for this competition, a QAPP must be prepared by those research organizations with applications selected for awards and submitted to the EPA

project officer for approval within 30 days after award, and before initiating data collection activities.

6.3 Review of Full Applications

A Review Panel (RP) will be convened to evaluate the submitted applications. It will be composed of approximately two non-EPA scientists and three EPA scientists selected by NCEA decision officials for their expertise in the research area. The most important criteria for award will be scientific merit and relevance to the advancement of risk assessment science. (See Section 6.1 for description of criteria and weights.) The panelists will be required to certify that no conflict of interest is created through the individuals' participation in the panel or review process, and that the individual will not benefit, personally or financially, either directly or indirectly, from any aspect of participation in the review process. Panel members will not be permitted to discuss or retain applications after the completion of the review process.

The reviewers will provide both a numerical score and a written evaluation of the application. The RP, then, will discuss and compare all final applications, including considerations of the review criteria, all reviewers' comments, funding availability, and NCEA-W scientific staff expertise and time commitments. The RP will prepare a written report of this process and make final recommendations as to acceptability for funding, to the NCEA -Washington Division Director.

6.4 Selection of Applications by Decision Official

After RP recommendations are finalized in report form, the applications will be submitted to the designated federal decision-making official for final funding decisions. For each application, the RP will provide the reviewers' written evaluations and scores. The decision official will select the most meritorious application or applications, based on the RP recommendations. This will not necessarily result in the highest-scored application receiving an award because of possible duplication and differences among the scoring criteria and among reviewers. The decision official also will provide written documentation explaining the final decisions, if the decision is notably different then would be expected from a review of the RP results.

After the selection process concludes, its tracking number, together with its written and numerical evaluations will be retained in a file by NCEA-W. Names of panel members will not be available and will not be in the information included in the file. At this point also, a letter will be sent to each applicant that submitted an application that indicates whether the application is being considered for funding.

6.5 Negotiating a Final Cooperative Agreement

Following selection of applications for funding, negotiations will begin to develop a final cooperative agreement package. At this point, competition is concluded and all restrictions on discussions with NCEA personnel are removed. Final issues to be determined include the selection of

a EPA collaborator as project officer, final budgets and terms of the agreement, response to reviewer's comments, final arrangement for Quality Assurance, including submission of a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), and other conditions. The purpose of the final negotiation step is to implement the applications that are selected in the competitive process described above. Care will be taken to avoid making changes to the cooperative agreement that might have significantly affected the outcome of the formal review process, or the evaluation of the application by the RP.

6.6 Award Process

The EPA Award Official in the Grants Operations Branch is responsible for issuing the final award for the cooperative agreement. No costs should be incurred before the award agreement is issued. Funding to begin research under the cooperative agreement will not be available until after the award is made. Awards will be expected to begin in federal FY-99, with the start date to be determined by the Award Official.

6.7 Project and Budget Periods

Generally, ORD limits cooperative agreements to a project period of three years. Normally, funding is provided each year for a one-year budget period. However, no more than two year's funding may be provided at any one time. The recipient must submit continuation Applications for each additional funding period (budget period). The application should provide a budget for each year.

6.8 Other Information to Applicants

6.8.1 Peer Review of Publications

EPA regulations (40 CRF 30.518) encourage publication of the results of cooperative research agreements. Reports and informational material prepared under the cooperative agreement must be submitted to NCEA for peer review prior to publication. Cooperating authors must give consideration to any peer review comments from this review. If NCEA does not approve publication clearance for the reports or other material, then the cooperating party may publish the work, providing the publication includes the appropriate disclaimer statement. This requirement for peer review extends to publications based on research conducted during the period of performance, even if the publication is prepared after the completion of the performance period.

In contrast to reports and informational material, journal articles which are prepared under the cooperative agreement without collaboration and co-authorship of NCEA scientists may be submitted directly for publication to a refereed journal at any time. In this instance, the researcher must submit one copy of the article to the NCEA project officer when it is transmitted to the journal, and three copies of the article after it is published. Conversely, journal articles prepared with NCEA scientists as lead authors or coauthors must be submitted to NCEA for peer review and clearance prior to submission to a journal.

6.8.2 Communication with EPA Employees During Competition

During the period of competition for cooperative agreements, it is illegal for any federal employee to knowingly provide, or for a potential competitor to solicit, information about a cooperative agreement that could confer an unfair competitive advantage to the recipient of such information. To reduce both the potential for inadvertent communication of such information, and the appearance of conferring unfair advantage, it is ORD policy to restrict any communication about cooperative agreements undergoing competition to systematic communication that insures that all competitors have equal access to information. In furtherance of this policy, do not contact or engage in discussions with NCEA employees for the purpose of seeking clarification or additional information about the research areas being competed in this request.